



NATURE WANDS!



It's no secret that being outdoors and connecting with nature is good for children's physical and mental health. But did you also know that imaginary play is equally important? This "Nature Wands" activity combines both in a hands-on experience that cultivates curiosity for the natural world while allowing children an opportunity for whimsical escapism.

"Nature Wands" can be done anywhere, and require a few simple materials and a lot of imagination.

To Begin: Tell your children that you are going to spend the day in a magical world. Let them know they are going to transform into wizards, and encourage them to imagine their wizard identity- Their wizard names, what their magical powers are, and the like. Explain that every good wizard needs a wand!

Next: Gather your materials! Set out with collection bags, and take your children on a walk, either around the neighborhood, to a park, or even throughout your front or backyard. First and foremost, they must find a stick- (Make sure it's not a flimsy one.) After they have chosen their stick, invite them to begin collecting natural materials- Things like leaves, petals, pods, seeds, grass, small stones, feathers, and flowers. (Foraging for these treasures is not only fun- It also gets kids moving, and taking a closer look at their natural surroundings.)

Finally: Attach your materials to your wands! This can be done in different ways, depending on the materials you have available. Choose from any of the methods below, or, engineer one of your own! There is no right or wrong way to design a Nature Wand- This is a great opportunity for your child to personalize their project and pour their own unique magic into it.

METHOD #1: Rubber Bands

- Gather a small pile of rubber bands. (If you don't have the disposable kind, hair ties work as well!) Wrap 3-4 rubber bands around different parts of the stick, making sure to place one close to the tip and to avoid placing one near the base of the stick where you will hold your wand. Make sure they are snug but not too tight, because- This is where you will attach your nature treasures! insert leaves, flowers, and other collected gems underneath the rubber bands until you are satisfied with your wand's appearance.

METHOD #2: Tape

- This can easily be done with any type of tape, but masking tape (or painters tape) is easiest. (If you have double-sided tape, even better!) Begin by cutting a long piece of tape, about 4 times the length of your stick. Line one end of the tape up with one end of the stick, and hold it against the base of the stick with the sticky side up. Using a smaller piece of tape, attach it to the base. While holding that end of the stick, carefully wrap the tape tightly around the stick on an angle until the entire stick is covered (remember, sticky side up!), then secure the end of the tape to the other end of the stick with a smaller piece of tape. The end result should be a stick entirely covered tightly in tape. Remember the tape does not need to look perfect- It's simply utilitarian. (Tip: Younger children will need a little fine motor help with this step.) From here, simply stick your nature treasures onto the tape and voila- Nature Wand!



METHOD #3: Wrapping

- This is an opportunity to add an extra pop of color to your wand. Search for pieces of yarn, ribbon, or even thin shreds of fabric that you can use to wrap around your sticks. Wire or fishing thread works great as well, but you can even use dental floss- It's surprisingly strong! Tie your "thread" to the base of your stick, leaving room at the bottom for where your hand will hold it. From there, begin wrapping your thread around your natural items by holding your leaves or feathers or the like in place against the stick and tightly wrapping the thread around them.

METHOD #4: Coiling

- This method requires a pipe-cleaner or piece of wire. Simply attach the pipe-cleaner or wire to one end of the stick, coil up and around the stick, and then secure it at the other end of the stick. This can be densely coiled or sparsely coiled- We recommend leaving ½ to 1 inch space between each coil. As with Method #1 above, make sure that this is snug but not too tight. Finally- Simply slip your nature treasures under the coils!



Let your child's imagination run wild with these, and let your child run wild with them too!. Nature Wands are ideal for encouraging children to explore outdoor spaces & create nature-based art while providing opportunities for storytelling, imaginative exploration, and a healthy dose of playful escapism. They are ideal for sprinkling a little discovery, creativity, and magic over a child's world.



Read more about "Why Pretend Play is Important to Child Development" on the following page.

Nature Wand Examples & Tutorials:

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WHY PRETEND PLAY IS IMPORTANT TO CHILD DEVELOPMENT

by Emma Homan

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"It is no secret that Pretend Play forms an essential part of a child's development. Children learn by observing, imagining and doing. We often think of "play time" as a time reserved for running around the playground and letting off steam between lessons, or for sitting down quietly with a few good toys to tinker with. These forms of play are important in themselves, but they are not the only forms of play. Learning through play is now widely recognized by practitioners as an essential method of learning and development for young children, and a number of theorists and researchers have identified the values of pretend or imaginative play as a vital contributor to the normal development of a child.

At any Early Childhood setting and across Elementary Schools, you will see children enjoying imaginative play; perhaps zooming a piece of paper around the room as if it were a racing car or a flying airplane, or playing the part of a firefighter in their engine, a shopkeeper, a parent, a dentist or a nurse. Children use objects to represent something else, or assign themselves and others roles and then act them out. It may seem very simple, but in pushing back the barriers of reality these children are learning and developing many different and important life skills. This pretend play, which allows different perspectives to be taken, and during which ideas and emotions are molded and rearranged, is a major feature of a child's social and cognitive development.

Research has identified that an important benefit of early pretend play is its enhancement of a child's capacity for cognitive flexibility and, ultimately, creativity. By absorbing themselves in an imaginative game, whatever it may be, children are given the opportunity to practice using their imagination, to exercise their brain and train it to think creatively, and to learn how to think for themselves. The ability to use our imagination is a cognitive skill that we all require throughout life, and we need to encourage children to learn how to do this from the start with frequent opportunities for imaginative play.

It is because of the development of the imagination during childhood that we as adults become capable of carrying out most of the tasks that daily life requires. Albert Einstein said, "Logic will get you from A to Z; imagination will get you everywhere." It is true! Adults have to use their imagination every day to help them solve problems, make plans, to prosper and discover or invent new things. Imagination is required to properly visualize and to be able to enjoy pleasures in life such as a good book or a film. It is an essential enabler for understanding other people's perspectives and for thinking creatively."

**View the full article here: <https://www.pentagonplay.co.uk/news-and-info/why-pretend-play-is-important-to-child-development>*